

Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala protect and preserve him),  
Vice President Darul Uloom Karachi

# Memories

## (Episode 28)

### Teaching Career

These events of Hajj are from 1964. In those days, one of the responsibilities I was assigned at Darul Uloom was teaching. At the same time, I was also undergoing training in writing Fatwas under the tutelage of our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him). Thirdly, at the instructions of our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) I had started learning English and some other contemporary subjects on my own. Let me present a summary of each of these three areas of work below.

My teaching career at Darul Uloom began with the very initial books, and I was gradually assigned books of higher years. Eventually, I happened to teach all books except *Sullam ul-Uloom* and *Meebazi*. The method of teaching we had learned from our honourable teacher Hazrat Maulana Sehban Mahmood Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was that he would first get a student to read the passage and would correct mistakes in his reading, if any. He would try to make the student identify his own mistake. Thereafter he would leave the book and directly explain the main points of the passage to the students. When he would be satisfied that the students had grasped his explanation, he would return to the book and translate the passage, and would point out how the passage being read applied to the explanation he had given. I followed this method of teaching during my teaching career and found it greatly beneficial. Our respected teacher (may Allah's mercy be upon him) also advised us that while studying a book in preparation of a class, besides understanding the lesson ourselves, we should also consider how best to systemize the lesson and what methods to adopt in teaching it such that the students' minds are least burdened during class. To this end, when teaching any book of any subject I would refer to its Arabic explanations, rather even other reference books, but would only present that much to the students which they could easily digest.

A major difference between our teaching method and the teaching method employed in colleges and universities is that in those institutions more importance is laid on the subject being taught than the book of that subject, and the main points of the subject are taught through lectures. But normally, no formal book is rigorously followed. In this way, though the student grasps the fundamental principles of the subject, since he has not built a relationship with a particular book, he does not normally get habituated to understanding something by self-study. In our teaching method on the other hand, a particular book is made the base for teaching any subject of any class, and a bond is created between the student and the book. In this way, the student becomes habituated to directly study the book and to understand its finer points on his own. However, sometimes the effort to understand the book is

exaggerated to such an extent that the explanations provided by the book become primary and the knowledge of the subject becomes of secondary importance. Furthermore, sometimes the book is taught in such a manner that it is considered imperative to reject any criticism raised against the author, and it also considered essential to make up alternative interpretations for any genuine mistakes made by the author.

The middle path between both these extremes is that the primary focus should be to teach the subject, and at the same time such a bond should be created between the student and the book that he should face no difficulty in carrying out self-study of the books of the subject whenever he desires.

Our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) used to narrate about his teacher Hazrat Allama Anwar Shah Kashmiri (may Allah's mercy be upon him) that he also used to teach in this way. He would not only teach the book, rather he would teach the subject together with the book. For all the books we studied under our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him), he also taught them in the same manner, and I tried to follow this myself as well. But for this, besides the book under study, one has to seek help from other books as well.

## Teaching Tafsir

Darul Uloom's curriculum features a lesson on the Tafsir (exegesis) of the Noble Quran in each year from the third year onwards. I happened to teach all parts of the Noble Quran across several years, and also taught Tafsir Jalalayn. But I felt the need for higher-level lessons on Tafsir. To this end, I requested our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) to begin a *Dawra-e-Tafsir* in the same format as the *Dawra-e-Hadith*. For this, I proposed that while it is not possible to teach a comprehensive book on Tafsir within one year, the following method can be employed: similar to the classes of *Dawra-e-Hadith*, in which the teacher and students follow a text and the teacher studies various commentaries of the text and then presents the main points in a lecture format, the same method can be followed for the *Dawra-e-Tafsir*. The teacher and students should follow the text of the Noble Quran, and the teacher should self-study the various Tafsir-related discussions, and thereafter present the main points to the students in a lecture format. Our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) liked this idea and assigned ten parts each of the Noble Quran to three teachers, and instructed them to teach according to this method. The parts from Surah Shu'ara till the end were assigned to me. I taught them with great enthusiasm in such a way that I would study the important books of Tafsir, such as Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Mazhari, Tafsir Qurtubi, and especially Imam Razi's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) Tafsir Kabir, and would thereafter present a summary of the main points of discussion before the students. In this process, I got the opportunity to go through Tafsir Kabir almost in its entirety. I realized that the critique regarding it that: *فيه كل شيء إلا التفسير* (meaning "it contains everything besides Tafsir") is a major injustice to this Tafsir. The reality is that the systematic way in which Imam Razi (may Allah's mercy be upon him) has presented Tafsir-related issues is unparalleled in any other Tafsir. It is true that he has elucidated upon *kalam*-related matters in elaborate details, but he has done so after clarifying the Tafsir-related discussions, and this was also the need of his times. But this cannot be used to downplay the value of his Tafsir in any way. Especially with regards to the topic of the arrangement of the Noble Quran and the mutual connections between its verses, his explanations are rather satisfactory most of the time.

Anyway! I benefitted a lot from that year's lessons on Tafsir. Some students wrote down my lectures as well. Especially Maulana Muhammad Ishaq Jehlami (who is currently a teacher of *Dawra-e-Hadith* at Darul Uloom) recorded it with great diligence.

## Teaching Hadith

In this manner, we continued teaching various books until we reached Mishkat Shareef. And thereafter we began being assigned some book from *Dawra-e-Hadith* as well. As far as I remember, the first book of *Dawra-e-Hadith* I was assigned was Ibn Majah. In those days, Dr Fazl Ur Rahman Sahab was the head of Idara Tahqeeqat Islami, and his unique views were quite popular. He held certain bizarre views regarding "Sunnah" which would lead one to distrust Ahadith altogether. Before beginning lessons on Ibn Majah, we presented an introduction to the students in which, besides stating the fundamental principles of the science of Hadith, we also discussed Dr Fazl Ur Rehman Sahab's concept of Sunnah al-Jariyah at length, and also had this introduction recorded. This discussion is now being published among my Urdu articles. Thereafter I happened to teach Sunan Nasai, Tahawi and Shama'il Tirmidhi in various years. During this time the lessons of Muwatta Imam Malik were also assigned to me. I felt that besides the four main books (Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Muslim and Abu Dawud), the remaining books which are partially taught all concurrently go through the same chapters of *Kitab ut-Taharah* (Book of Purity) and *Kitab us-Salah* (Book of Prayer). Therefore when I was assigned to teach Muwatta Imam Malik, I felt that instead of beginning it from the start, it would be more beneficial for myself and the students to begin it from *Kitab ul-Buyoo'* (Book of Transactions). I therefore began from *Kitab ul-Buyoo'*. I did not appreciate the complexities of this book at that time, but I began realizing this as the lessons progressed. And at some points I felt hopelessly lost. In fact Imam Malik's Fiqhi terminology is quite unique, so sometimes it would take hours just to understand them and I would have to refer to all the available commentaries of Muwatta. But the benefit to me of all this was that I developed some aptitude for the methodology of the Maliki Fiqh.

From the time we were studying *Dawra-e-Hadith*, the lesson of Saheeh Bukhari used to be conducted by Hazrat Maulana Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) and the lesson of Tirmidhi Sharif was under Hazrat Maulana Saleem Ullah Khan Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him). When both these elders left Darul Uloom one after the other, our respected father (may his secret be sanctified) took up the lesson of Saheeh Bukhari, while the lesson of Jami' Tirmidhi was transferred to Hazrat Maulana Sehban Mahmood Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him). Our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) initially used to reside in our house at Lasbela House and would visit Darul Uloom a few times every week. But as I have written before, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1963, equivalent to 9<sup>th</sup> of Dhil Hijjah 1382H, he wound down his activities in the city and moved to Darul Uloom for the sake of the lessons of Saheeh Bukhari. Our two elder brothers, respected Muhammad Razi Usmani Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) and respected Muhammad Wali Raazi Sahab (may his shade be extended), continued residing in the house at Lasbela. While previously we had to stay away from our parents, Alhamdulillah after our parents moved to Darul Uloom we also attained the comforts of living at home under the shade of our parents. Besides this, the biggest benefit was being able to stay in the constant company and service of our respected father (may his secret be sanctified). Now we were blessed with

being under the direct care and nurture of our respected father, and we also got an opportunity to understand his efforts.

But our respected father's (may his secret be sanctified) efforts and activities were so varied that he often had to undertake lengthy journeys for these, and would also have to often go to the city. As a result, it eventually became difficult for him to continue with the lessons of Saheeh Bukhari and he decided to transfer them to Hazrat Maulana Sehban Mahmood Sahab, who used to teach Jami' Tirmidhi until that time. Since the responsibilities of Academic Coordinator were also under Hazrat Maulana Sehban Mahmood Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), it was not possible for him to continue teaching the lessons of Jami' Tirmidhi together with the lessons of Saheeh Bukhari. Therefore the question arose as to who should the lessons of Jami' Tirmidhi, which is considered a rather important class of *Dawra-e-Hadith*, be assigned? At this point Hazrat Maulana Sehban Mahmood Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) proposed to our respected father (may his secret be sanctified) that this lesson should now be transferred to Taqi. I was conscious of my lack of ability and unworthiness, so I was reluctant at first. But since this was an order from my elders, I thought to myself that if one's elders assign some work without oneself desiring or asking for it, then InshaAllah one will be given the ability to accomplish it from Allah the Blessed and Most High. I therefore began this lesson with the name of Allah the Most High, and thereafter this lesson remained with me for about twenty years. Initially, the preparation of this lesson would take me about three to four hours. My memory was weak, so I would prepare notes during my preparation and would briefly go through them before the class. I would dictate the lecture in my first year of teaching, but discontinued this method from the next year. An Iranian student Maulvi Ata Ullah Sahab had recorded my lecture. For many years I would keep his notes before me during the lesson, and would edit and revise them every year. I would also cite the source of most points on its margins. This continued until my nephew Maulana Rasheed Ashraf Sahab (may Allah keep him safe)<sup>1</sup> (who is now MashaAllah a much-loved teacher of Jami' Tirmidhi himself) completed his *Dawra-e-Hadith*, and he expressed his desire to compile my lectures of Tirmidhi along with *tahqeeq* (researched analysis) and *takhreej* (authentication of Hadith), so I passed my notes to him. He then went on to compile it with MashaAllah such competence, deep research and conscientiousness, and made valuable additions to it from himself, that with the grace of Allah Ta'ala it was published as "*Dars-e-Tirmidhi*", and it became a useful resource for students as well as teachers of Tirmidhi. Sadly Maulana Rasheed Ashraf Sahab (may Allah keep him safe) was assigned numerous administrative responsibilities, due to which he could only continue his efforts up to three volumes, till *Kitab ut-Talaq*. On the hand, students began insisting for the remaining lectures to be published as soon as possible as well. In view of their needs, Maulana Abdullah Memon Sahab (may Allah keep him safe) (who is currently the Director of Darul Uloom's branch Bayt ul-Mukarram) recorded the lectures of the remaining chapters using a tape recorder and expressed the idea to publish it exactly as it is, without any additional *tahqeeq*

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<sup>1</sup> Maulana Rasheed Ashraf Sahab was still alive and teaching Jami' Tirmidhi when this text was written. But sadly he is not with us any more when this is being published. His passing away on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2019 was, and is, a huge tragedy for us as well as his thousands of devoted companions. إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ (We certainly belong to Allah, and to Him we are bound to return). Looking at his services, the following line of poetry spontaneously comes to mind: خوش درخشید ولی شعله مستعجل بود. (How brilliantly it flashed, but it was a flame which extinguished soon) May Allah Ta'ala have infinite mercy upon him.

(researched analysis) and *takhreej* (authentication of Hadith), and that Maulana Rasheed Ashraf Sahab could continue his research on those chapters whenever he got the opportunity. I accepted this proposal with the addition that this part should be titled "*Taqreer-e-Tirmidhi*" instead of "*Dars-e-Tirmidhi*". This then happened. The chapters after *Kitab ut-Talaq*, from *Kitab ul-Buyoo'* onwards were published as *Taqreer-e-Tirmidhi*, which is Alhamdulillah fulfilling the needs of the students. But there remained work to be done on it in the manner that Maulana Rasheed Ashraf Sahab (may Allah keep him safe) had done in "*Dars-e-Tirmidhi*". For this, another graduate and Muhaqqiq of Darul Uloom, Maulana Abu Bakr Ihsaan Sahab (may Allah keep him safe), who is the head of a big Madrasa and research center in Mardan, personally began this work with great competence and deep research, and now it will soon be completed and published.

I continued teaching Jami' Tirmidhi for about twenty years, and Sahih Bukhari was under our beloved teacher Hazrat Maulana Sehban Mahmood (may Allah's mercy be upon him).

After Eid ul-Adha of the year 2000, I departed for India to participate in some Fiqhi (jurisprudential) discussions at the invitation of Hazrat Maulana Mujahid ul-Islam Qasmi (may Allah's mercy be upon him). The discussions were to take place in Patna, the capital of Bihar. Afterwards, I intended to visit Lucknow, Deoband, Thana Bhavan, etc., and thereafter I had booked a flight from Delhi to London, as I was supposed to participate in a gathering there. I arrived at Patna via Delhi, and then participated in the discussions. But I received a phone call from my elder brother Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Rafee' Usmani Sahab (may his shade be extended) on the second day in which he broke the harrowing news that Hazrat Maulana Sehban Mahmood Sahab (may his secret be sanctified) had passed away. This traumatic news shook me to the core, and I postponed my remaining planned journeys and hastily rushed back utterly stunned. Neither was I destined to see him for one last time, nor could I participate in his funeral and burial. Gloom had engulfed everyone at Darul Uloom. Hazrat's passing away created immense voids on many fronts, and especially important among those was the lesson of Sahih Bukhari. My respected brother (may his shade be extended) commanded: "Now you have to conduct the lessons of Sahih Bukhari." Other teachers were also unanimous on this proposal. I was plunged into a world of astonishment. Who am I to teach such a (lofty) book as Sahih Bukhari? Acting upon this recommendation appeared to be presumptuous audacity on my side. However, this was the command of my elders. Therefore, despite realizing my unworthiness, I took up this responsibility relying upon Allah. To this end, I reduced other activities and travels that year and focused more on the lessons of Sahih Bukhari. I made a habit of studying for about three to four hours every day in preparation for its lessons, during which I would refer to most of the commentaries of Bukhari. But after several trials, I made Shaykhul Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya Sahab's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) "*Lami' ud-Durari*" and, until the beginning of *Kitab us-Salah*, Hazrat Allama Shabbir Ahmad Sahab Usmani's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) lectures on Bukhari, i.e. "*Fazl ul-Bari*", as the main basis of my studies.

For a few years, I had to teach both parts of Sahih Bukhari. During this time Maulana Anwar Husain Sahab, who had graduated from Darul Uloom a few years before, began recording my lectures using a tape recorder and then penning them down. He later published this as "*In'am ul-Bari*", of which eleven volumes have been published until now. After a few years, I passed the second part of Sahih Bukhari to my highly capable and competent nephew Maulana Mahmood Ashraf Usmani Sahab, which he taught

with great ability, and the students greatly benefited from his lessons. Then he suffered from a severe heart attack due to which he was unable to conduct any lessons for one year. As a result, I got the opportunity to render my services for both the parts. Thereafter for some years, he taught most of the second part while I taught the remaining part. Alhamdulillah now he has been teaching the complete second part for many years. May Allah Ta'ala put *barakah* (blessing) in his health, life, knowledge and action, and may He let his blessings continue for a long time. Ameen.